# SFL in the IPEIT Classroom:

# Going Beyond the Spoken and the Written to the Social

Hedia Ben Elouidhnine[1] & Kaouther Ferjani[2]

[1]Hedia Ben Elouidhnine: Higher Institute of Languages, Tunis
[2]KaoutherFerjani: Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities, La Manouba

## Abstract

Language use cannot be divorced from the context in which it takes place. In the academic circles, the context can be twofold: one concerned with language learning while the other interested in language assessment. The aim of this research paper is to shed light on both perspectives by setting a high premium on the speaking performances and the writing assignments of the first-year *preparatory engineering* students (FYPESs). Hence, the targeted field of enquiry would be that of ESP. The point is to draw a convergence line between both foci while showing their close congruence with *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL). In this regard, both written and spoken corpora were collected to present genre-based pedagogy as one of the crucial aspects of SFL educational linguistic work. A semi-structured questionnaire was also conducted for the sake of data corroboration. The overarching aim is to introduce both productive levels of performance as essential paths towards FYPESs' language use and socialization into the ESP classroom 'culture'. Ultimately, the *systemic functional perspective* of the English language, in general, and ESP, in particular, is targeted, being a *system* that *functions* not only linguistically but equally socially in the Tunisian ESP teaching setting.

**Key words:** SFL, genre-based pedagogy, Collaborative Learning, Language use, context, speaking and writing performances, socialization, ESP, classroom culture, FYPESs.

## Introduction

The purpose of the present paper is to report on a case study conducted at the *Preparatory Institute for Engineering Studies* (IPEIT).As will be shown, there is a symbiotic relationship between the spoken and the written, traced via the social which is at the heart of SFL. The latter would mingle the speaking and writing performances of the participants as academic genres pedagogically applied to the IPEIT English classroom. As such, the article at hand would present genre theory as a crucial catalyst for collaboration and socialization between the teacher and students (T-S) as well as among students themselves (S-S). In this framework, a corpus composed of a portion of FYPESs' written assignments was collected. A think-aloud protocol on their spoken performances was also employed to yield further evidence. Both corpora were nurtured via the use of a semi-structured questionnaire that was filled out by a sample of Tunisian FYPESs. Results are then outlined and interpreted. The findings will have crucial implications for not only *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) but equally for *Language Teaching Pedagody* (LTP) and SFL as a whole.

## 1. Literature Review:

### 1.1. The SFL Perspective:

SFL was coined by M.A.K. Halliday in the U.K. in the 1960's. It depicts language as a social system that functions in a particular social context where text structure and meaning are brought to the fore. Unlike today's theories that "… are concerned with language as a mental process, SFL is more closely aligned with Sociology" (O'Donnell, 2011, p. 2). It presents two crucial relations in language description: syntagmatic relations and paradigmatic relations. The former target the ordering of linguistic elements within a unit while the latter are mainly preoccupied with the mutual substitution of language elements in a particular context (Ibid). SFL is therefore a joint between text and context. To create a text, whether

spoken or written, language users are offered a repertoire of linguistic choices that are per se context-governed (Haratyan, 2011). Choice, as a concept, is at the essence of SFL. In the language system, choice occurs with regard to meaning rather than structure. Meaning is construed within a social system. The switch in locus from form to function, hence from structure to meaning has announced the shift from the syntactic age to the semiotic age (Fontaine, 2012) in which the functional orientation of language is prioritized. In other words, "language function (what it is used for) is often more important than language structure (how it is composed)" (O'Donnell, 2011, p. 7).

The notion of context is at the heart of SFL. Liu (2014) maintains that "SFL views language as a social semiotic resource people use to accomplish their purposes by expressing meanings in context" (p. 1239). The latter notion is used to invoke the sentential structure of texts. Hence, the focus was the verbal. Nevertheless, modern linguistics engrosses today the extension of the meaning of context from the verbal to the non-verbal, even social and cultural environment (Lukin et al, 2011). This provides an appropriate account for the existence of two types of context: "context of situation" and "context of culture" (Liu, 2014, p. 1239). The first is that of register while the second is that of genre.

In SFL, language can be researched when it is used in a specific social setting. In the paper at hand, such a setting is represented by the Tunisian ESP classroom pertaining to the *preparatory engineering* field. SFL can be *externally manifested* through teachers and students' use of language in context while abiding by certain genre-based requirements and following a set of moves that account for their textual and contextual choices. These moves are those of the FYPESs' spoken and written syllabus-related productions.

## 1.2. The Genre Perspective:

The genre concept has emerged since the 1980's as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes (Swales, 1990, p. 58). Genres

> ... are patterns of action, activity structures, rather than relations of thematic meaning. Speech genres, written genres, and action genres all specify regular sequencing of types of action, of the functional constituents of an overall activity. (Lemke, 1988, p. 82)

As contended by Liu (2014), genre is the context of culture. It includes register (context of situation) that "...holds the dimensions of Halliday's systemic functional theory together" (Lukin et al, 2011p. 188) and through which language acts "... while genre is related to social processes which are the sites of social struggle and of social change" (Liu, 2014, p. 1239). Register is orchestrated according to three contextual parameters: *field*, *tenor*, and *mode* (Halliday, 1978). Merely *field* is the topic to investigate, *tenor* is the role(s) of interactants in a communicative exchange, while *mode* is the rhetorical channel whereby to communicate: spoken, written, or some combination of both (Liu, 2014). Such parameters, or variables, mirror the "semantic diversity" (Ibid) of language, hence its metafunctions. They also give shape to the situation's semiotic structure and link between text and context.

*Field*, *tenor*, and *mode* have already been standpoints in Swales' (1990) genre theory which is concerned with the analysis of the move structures pertaining to a particular genre, be it spoken or written. It has been developed from SFL which suggests a model of language that includes both the context of situation and the context of culture. Recently, this theory has mingled with LTP to yield genre-based pedagogy (GBP) which is in turn meant "… to teach academic and professional writing" (Millar, 2011, p. 3). More, Millar (2011) perceives GBP as social on the ground that it is through it that members of a particular culture mutually interact. However, Lemke (1988) asserts that given the little heed cast to genres, namely those of the language classroom, learners should be *explicitly* taught them and be made more aware

of theircorresponding rules. Indeed, "the mastery of something as essential as formal genres needs to be insured for all students" (Ibid). The same stance is shared by the present paper that targets both the written and the spoken genres at the IPEIT first-year classroom, namely, short paragraphs/essays (as written genres) and oral presentations (as spoken genres).

**1. 2.1. The Written Genre: Short paragraphs/Essays:**

Zemach and Rumisek (2003) define a paragraph as "a group of sentences about a single *topic*" (p.11).Combining the sentences together would provide an account of the writer's main idea about the topic. FYPESs are expected to write an opinion paragraph that ranges in length from ten to fifteen lines and that includes the following moves:
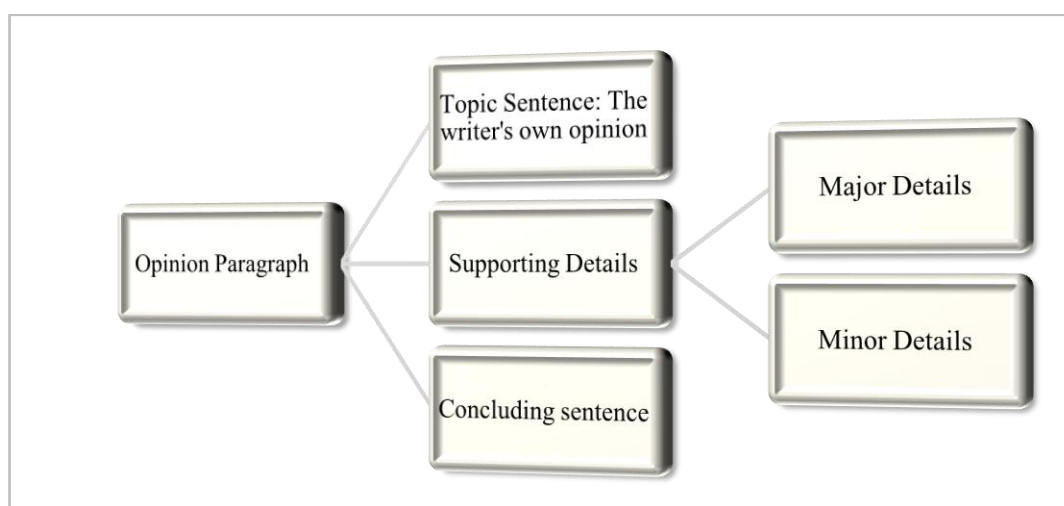


**Figure 1: Structure of an opinion paragraph**

As shown in Figure 1, the opinion paragraph is made up of three main components: a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence. The topic sentence tells what the writer thinks or feels about a topic. The supporting details encompass the reasons and details to explain the writer's opinion and concretize it. They are twofold: major and minor; that is, the central arguments and their corresponding examples for illustration. As for the

concluding sentence, it restates the writer's opinion and sums up the main points dealt with. Briefly, FYPESs are supposed to abide by a three-move opinion paragraph.

### 1.2.2. The Spoken Genre:

The mostly eminent spoken genres used at the IPEIT, especially for FYPESs, as set by the curriculum, are oral presentations. These are assessment forms that teachers frequently use in the classroom and that come in a variety of styles, from multimedia projects to group work to speeches. Grading them is based on the quality of the information presented as well as the method of presenting it. They are also nurtured through the use of the technological component, especially video clips or slide shows. They require the presenter not only to use visual aids to illuminate a given idea or topic but also to follow certain moves as parts of their structures. Currently, "Oral presentations are becoming a more important part of language teaching, especially in the university environment" (Miles, 2009, p. 103), which accounts for its recent introduction at the IPEIT.

### 1.3. The CL Perspective:

The traditional competitive method of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) deems the teacher the sole instructor and decision-maker in an individual-oriented frontal lesson. It devalues the learners' active participation in the teaching and learning process. Worse, it does not give them real opportunities to be really productive in the target language (TL) (Glasser, 1986; Nunan, 1992). General complaints about this method have resulted so far in its regression, and even substitution by CL: an alternative method of instruction that recognizes the learners' cooperation on classroom assignments. Review of literature has revealed that students who work on a given classroom task, in dyads or in groups, achieve better than those working individually (Nunan, 1992).To Olsen (2011), CL as a crucial component of *Peer Learning*, equally helps develop students' problem-solving, engagement,

and team skills. In a nutshell, *letting students do it themselves* would push them to promote their learning.

In the Tunisian ESP setting, CL has become an urge today, with the recent advances of *engineering* and *preparatory engineering* studies and students' needs for English, especially spoken and written English to disseminate their approaches and projects to a wider global community at the academic and professional scales. To this end, they should develop in advance their productive skills. In this vein, Mathews (1994) maintains that CL is the key towards learning how to exchange opinions, take turns, lead discussions, and open and close conversations. Gerry and Wingard (1992) state too that communication is elicited only via the conversations which could pull out shared information. As to Murray (1992), CL enhances students' writing skills via their division into smaller groups that are responsible for constructing their personal cognizance and for learning social, communicative, and productive skills via a self-directed process. This self-direction is advocated by Kohonen (1992) who finds "stretching the learners' skills" (p. 29) to stimulate his/her "productive use" (Ibid) of the TL a basic necessity. It is also appealed for by Broady and Kenning (1998) who link it to the learner's autonomy.

Nunan (1992) as well as Donoughand and Shaw (1993) are in favor of fostering a positive learning environment that is interactive and supportive. They also appeal for the application of pair- or group-work as teaching strategies that contribute to the creation of such an environment that in turn "… offers possibilities for learners to develop oral and written skills, as well as background knowledge of the target country" (Carpenter, 1996, p. 29). Assinder (1991) also stresses the importance of such collaborative strategies in enhancing and enriching EFL teaching sessions by inciting interaction among EFL learners. This article wonders: How to move beyond? That is, how to apply CL strategies in such an *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) context as that of the Tunisian *preparatory engineering* one?

CL is a major component of SFL, being a main engine of socialization inside the classroom. The latter is the social educational context that is constructed and co-constructed through T-S and S-S "social encounters" (Ducharme & Bernard, 2001, p. 826) shaped through their mutual interaction. Classroom interaction, in particular, represents a 'microworld' where both teachers and learners form a social group that attempts to socialize into the classroom community (Gourlay, 2005).

## 2. Methodology:

The present section describes the methodology used to gather and analyze data about FYPESs' perceptions of their both written and spoken performances, through which they draw their socialization into the 'culture' of the Tunisian ESP classroom. To this effect, triangulation (See Figure 2) was used and applied on a sample of FYPESs as follows:
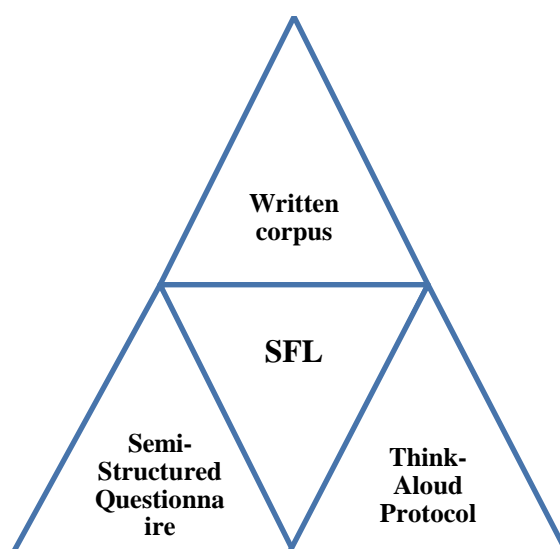


**Figure 2: Triangulation**

The study begins with a corpus compilation of 30 written samples of FYPESs' productions. This written corpus was meant to gauge the extent to which these participants apply the conventions of opinion paragraph writing in English and abide by its required moves (See section 1.2.1.). This sub-genre is the most eminent one with regard to graduate academic writing at the IPEIT, being the main object of written assessment in students' due

and final exams. It is also a main tool for inculcating to some extent the move analysis that Swales (1990) praises. Embarking on exploring the moves pertinent to such a sub-genre applied at the university sector would provide insight about students' genre-based awareness (Suryani, 2014).

Another rather spoken corpus was used to provide further evidence. It consisted in eliciting data from 30 think-aloud protocols that mirrored each of FYPESs' *eavesdropping on their thinking* about what generally goes on in the classroom. In the think-aloud protocol method, "the subject is asked to talk aloud, while solving a problem and this request is repeated if necessary during the problem-solving process thus encouraging the subject to tell what he or she is thinking" (Van Someren et al., 1994, p. 26). Thus, participants talk and verbalize what they perceive while getting involved in the task per se and striving to solve it. Van Someren et al. (1994) added that "the data so gathered are very direct, there is no delay" (p. 26). It is an appropriate tool in encouraging students to reflect on their spoken undertakings in English, hence rethink the link between theory and practice.

The third instrument used was a semi-structured questionnaire conducted on a sample of 60 participants during the second term of the academic year 2014-2015.The use of questionnaires is meant to elicit the required information about: [1] the way whereby their writing and speaking activities converge, [2] whether the blending of both activities help this social group of learners integrate into the culture of the ESP classroom, and [3] explore the main characteristics that define such culture. In his book on the *Construction, administration and processing of questionnaires*, Dőrnyei's (2003) claimed that questionnaires "are *versatile*, which means that they can be used successfully with a variety of people in a variety of situations targeting a variety of topics" (p. 10). The above claim is further corroborated by Petrić and Czărl (2003) who emphasize the role of questionnaires in pulling out data that reflect what participants "…think they are doing or should be doing when writing" (p. 189).

## 3. Results & Discussion:

### 3.1. Written-Corpus-Based Results:

The present study made use of a sample of 30 written opinion paragraphs. Results showed that the majority of participants respected the related conventional structure of such a genre. In more specific terms, most of FYPESs were aware of the written-genre-based activity they were asked to take up. The given assignment was part of the written assessment for which they were supposed to sit each term. Analysis of their written corpora revealed that 73.3% of them managed to integrate their opinion within the introducing sentence while 26.7% did not. Indeed, most of them almost succeeded in going through the first move (See Figure 3). Regarding the body, it was found out that although most of them (83.3%) wrote the major details; that is, the basic arguments corresponding to the given topic, only a few of them (16.7%) did not punch the minor details or the examples needed for illustration into their paragraphs (See Figures 5 and 6). Therefore, there were some limitations concerning FYPESs' abidance by the second move of opinion-paragraph writing. As far as the third move is concerned, 21 students (70%) out of 30 (30%) managed to write the conclusion despite the presence of certain inconveniences like the absence of well-written summaries (See Figure 4).
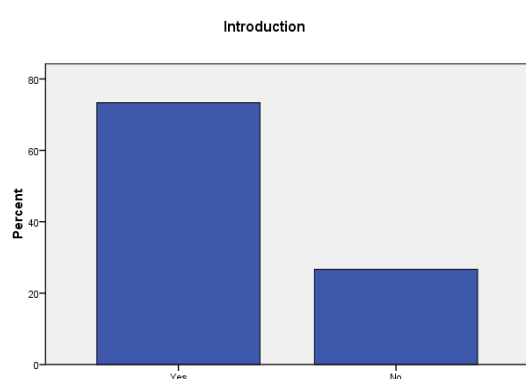
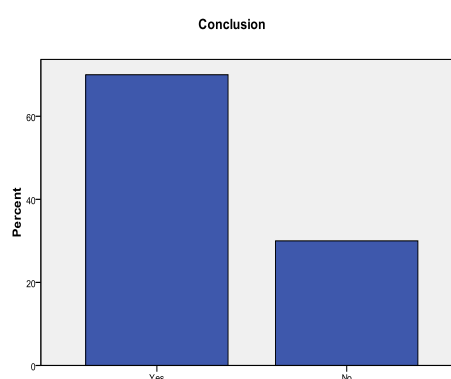**Figure 3: Students' integration of their opinions in the introduction section**

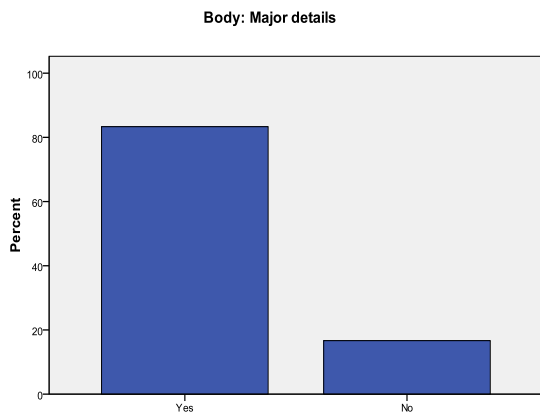**Figure 4: Students' integration of the conclusion section**

**Body: Major details**

**Body: Minor details**

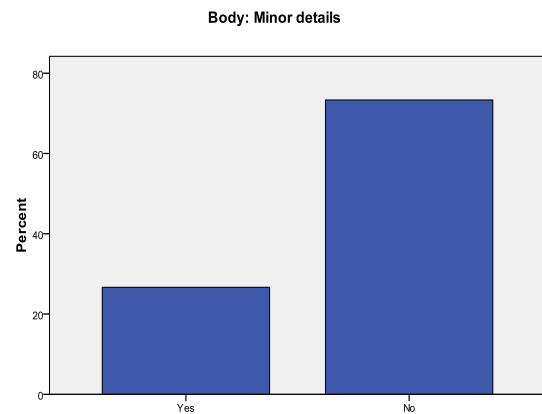**Figure 5: Students' integration of major
details within the body**

**Figure 6: Students' integration of minor
details within the body**

### 3.2. Think-Aloud Protocol-Based Results:

In addition to writing, assessment was done at the level of speaking. The spoken genre that was addressed to 30 FYPESs was the oral presentation: the task that students should solve and through which they verbalize and voice their thoughts. The think-aloud protocol method is praised by many researchers who find it a suitable technique to enlighten the thinking processes that go on in the minds of participants, hence the ones related to their cognition in the targeted field of enquiry (Charters, 2003). To gauge their spoken performance, 30 FYPESs were asked to fill in a think-aloud protocol that was given to them on the spot after their 9spoken deliveries distributed over 3 sessions with the rate of 3 presentations each. The student presenters belonging to the same class were asked to divide themselves into groups who were supposed to talk about miscellaneous topics of their own choice but the ones related to their curriculum. The groups were ultimately divided into 3 major groups: Groups 1 and 3 or (A) and (C) consisted of 3 sub-groups – made up of 3 each– while Group 2 (B) was made up of 3 subgroups that encompassed 4 students per group.

Figure 7 below sums up the overall mean of participants' think-aloud protocols. Results show that most of participants assessed positively the following variables: audibility,

pace, fluency, tone and energy, structure and organization, and use of visual aids. Accordingly, the majority did not seem to have any problems regarding clarity of pronunciation, flow of ideas, fluency of the speech patterns presented and familiarity with the used materials. Likewise, they appreciated the tone adhered to by the presenters as well as their enthusiasm and their motivation about the input they delivered to their classmates. They also approved of the logic of the order, the outline of the structure, the effective balance of the elements and timing accuracy. This was upheld by the presenters' skillful use of visual aids, mainly data show for power point presentations.

However, most of the student reporters were found to be unconscious of the importance of body language and eye contact. Hence, they did not pay enough heed to non-verbal interaction encapsulated in the use of facial expressions. They rather seemed to be note-bound. Their postures were neither upright nor confident enough to allow them to keep track of what they were saying. The content and approach were equally deemed irrelevant and boring. Worse, they needed further training concerning the genre-based organization of an oral presentation. Thus, appearing more competent in the written than in the spoken genres, FYPESs generally need a more intensive and explicit instruction in the latter.
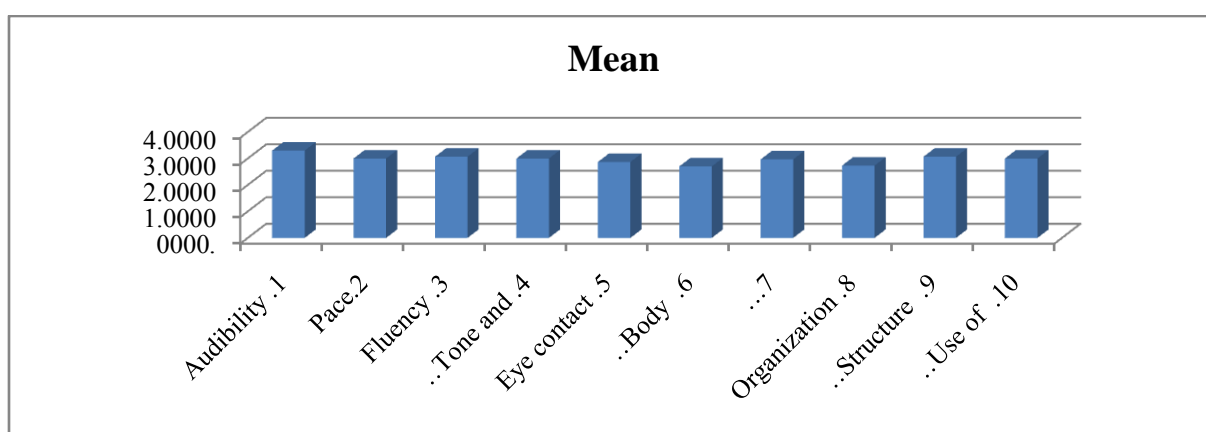


**Figure 7: The overall mean of participants' think-aloud protocols**

### 3.2. Questionnaire-Based Results:

This questionnaire was made up of three main sections. The first part was meant to provide some snippets about respondents' personal information, notably their age and gender. The second section (from questions 1 to 6) assessed their perceptions of CL, the speaking and writing skills they collaborated upon and the activities they engaged in inside the classroom. As for the third section (from questions 7 to 10), it shed light on their attitudes towards such variables as, topic choice, peer learning, learning atmosphere, and the extent of their engagement in and awareness of the classroom 'culture.' To handle the required data, the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) software was used for statistical analysis.

**Table 1: Age and gender distribution of participants**

| | | Gender | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Male** | **Female** | |
| **Age group** | **19 years old** | 22 | 22 | 44 |
| | **20 years old** | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| | **21 years old** | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | | 29 | 31 | 60 |

Table 1 shows that the target population consisted of 60 FYPESs: 29 males and 31 females falling between three main age categories. 44 subjects were under 20 years old, 14 were at the age of 20, while 2 were above 20. Consequently, the main category of respondents involved those under 20.

FYPESs were first asked about their collaboration in English learning. This question aimed at finding about their collaborative strategies, as a point of convergence of their miscellaneous classroom activities and a key towards transcending the spoken and the written to the social. Analysis of findings shows that more than half of them (41) reported they learned collaboratively while 19 did not (See Figure 8).
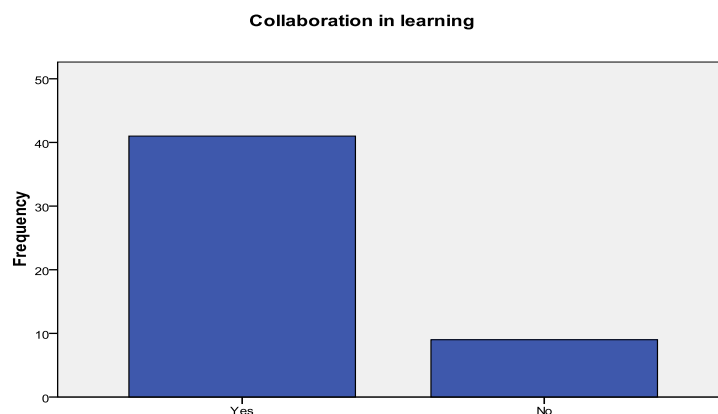
Collaboration in learning

**Figure 8: Collaboration in English learning**

When asked with whom they collaborated, 12 of respondents said that it occurred with the teacher, 23 claimed that it was essentially with their peers and 25 reported that such collaboration was twofold: T-S and S-S (See Figure 9 below). Thus, collaboration is given enough attention and is subject to implementation in the first-year IPEIT classroom.
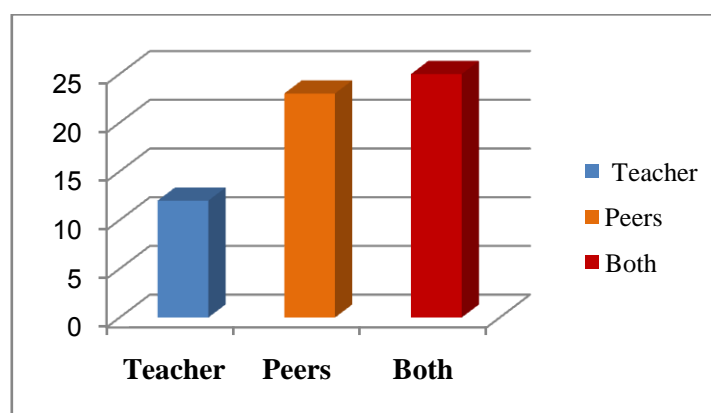


**Figure 9: Students' partners in collaboration**

In the third question, FYPESs were asked about the skills they collaborated mostly upon. Figure 10 shows that they were both speaking and writing skills, with 20 of respondents stressing that they collaborated mostly on speaking and 17 emphasized that collaboration occurred mainly at the level of writing. This question proves that both productive skills were paramount and almost blended in the IPEIT classroom.
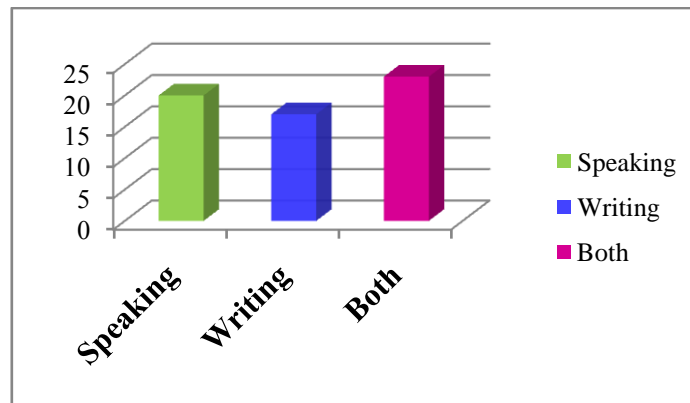
**Figure 10: Skills most collaborated upon in class**

Data related to the fourth question sought to explore the sort of speaking assignments students were exposed to in class. Oral presentations were ranked first (39) followed by dialogues (15). However, only 5 students reported that they collaborated mostly upon role plays. As for writing assignments (question five), a large number of respondents (42) said they wrote mostly short paragraphs while 18 said they wrote mostly essays (See Figures 11 and 12 below).
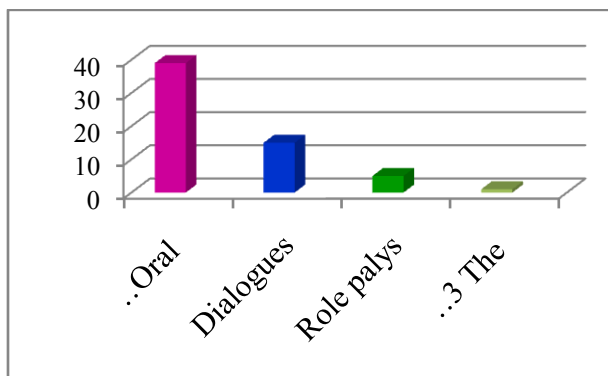


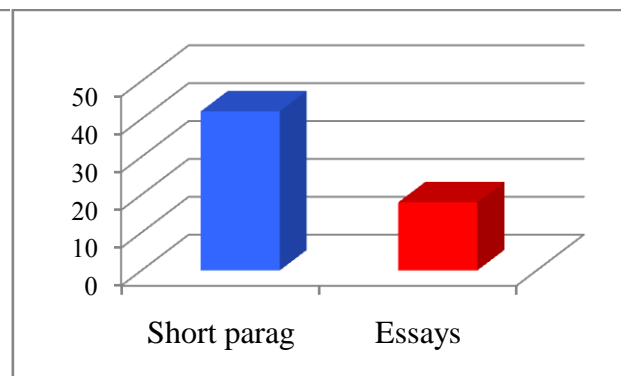**Figure 11: Speaking assignments mostly collaborated upon**



**Figure 12: Writing assignments mostly collaborated upon**

When respondents were asked, in the sixth question, if the spoken and written tasks were divided among them, 35 of them answered with 'yes' while 25 said 'no' (See Figure 13). Such assignments are goal-oriented. They equally reflect the intrusion of group work as a teaching strategy that is paramount in the first-year IPEIT classroom. According to Davis

(1999), group work is a must in course design if students are expected to solve certain problems or take in-due course decisions. Thus, for Davis (1999) group work should be thought of as "… something that helps shape the design of the syllabus and helps synthesize specific course objectives" (p. 1).
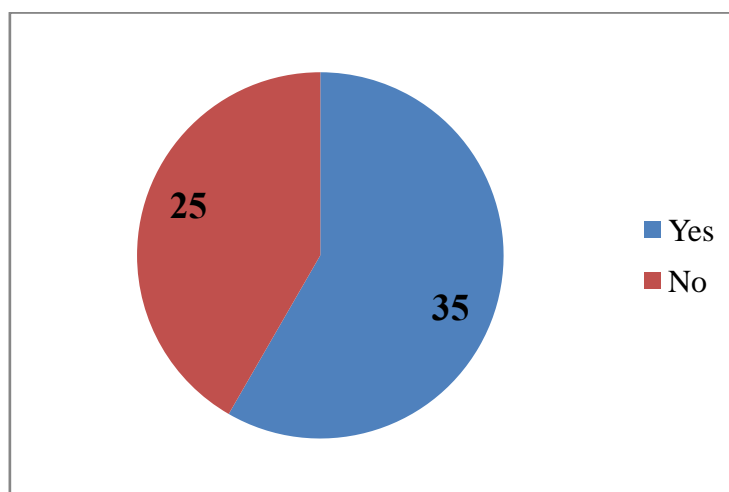


**Figure 13: Task division among FYPESs**

In the seventh question, FYPESs were solicited to assess the topics treated in class (See Figure 14). Results show that 23 of them enjoy the topics tackled in their class. Meanwhile, 11 of them find the topics interesting on the ground that they incite conversation, hence in-class discussion. Therefore, the majority of FYPESs seem to be satisfied with the work dealt with in-class. "Satisfying work gives them feelings of belonging, sharing, power, importance and freedom regarding what to do, and it is also fun" (Kohonen, 1992, p. 18). Such feelings of commitment, care, and concern contribute to the increase of their intrinsic motivation. This kind of motivation

1. satisfies needs such as belonging, acceptance, satisfaction from work, self-actualization, power and self-control;
2. manifests itself primarily in the form of feelings, e.g. feelings of success and competence;
3. is connected with work, involving feelings of relevance of work, satisfaction derived from work, feelings of progress and achievement, and feelings of growth as a person.(Kohonen, 1992, p. 18)

It follows that intrinsic motivation is a key towards self-direction and growth. However, one should not overlook the fact that 14 of respondents did not appreciate the topics dealt with in-class and gauge them as being boring while 8 asserted that those topics were far from being engaging. All in all, the image is not fully bright as one can imagine.
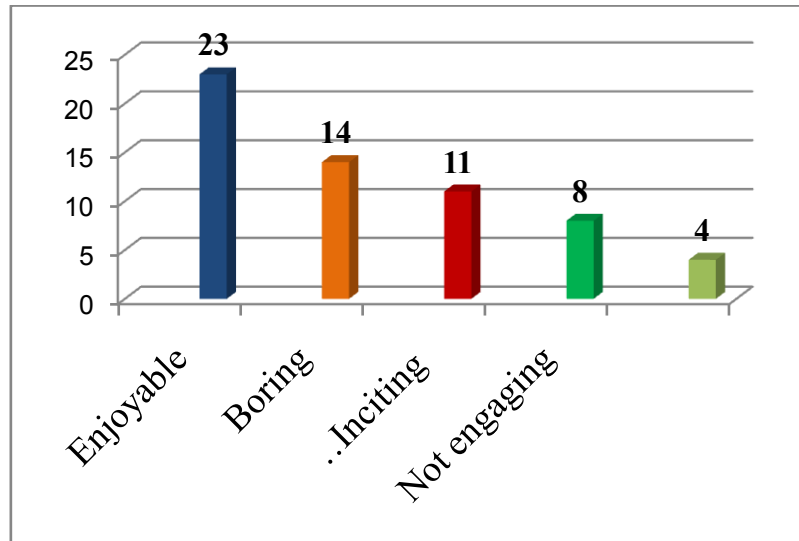


**Figure 14: Students' perceptions of the topics treated in class**

The eighth question of the questionnaire targeted *peer learning*, being a form of socialization and integration into the classroom 'culture' (Assinder, 1991). What was found out was that 26 of FYPESs acknowledged their socialization into that culture. Though socialization outranked motivation, 21 of respondents declared that both of them stand for key factors of *peer learning* (See Figure 15).
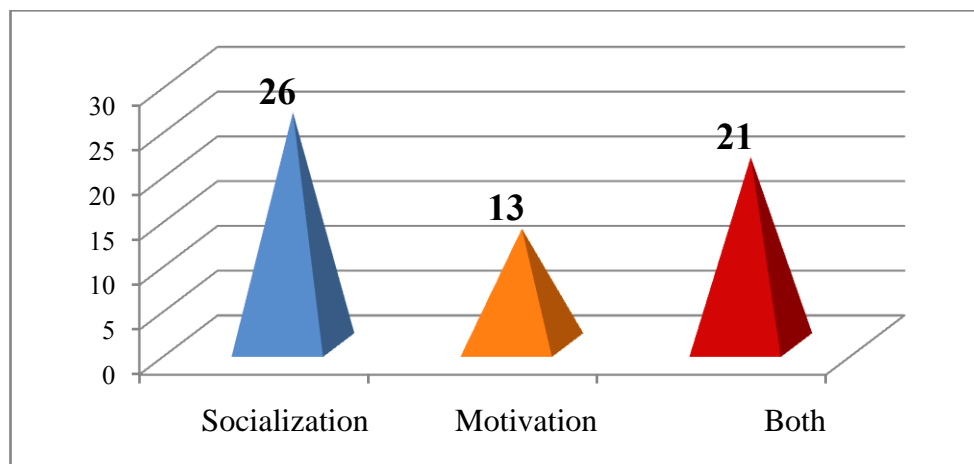


**Figure 15: Peer learning**

Duff & Anderson (2015) appealed for the importance of socializing students into the cultural practices of the English language classroom. Layton (2014) also affirmed that socialization is a crucial technique that contributes to the social and emotional growth of the students and is one of their main assets to achieve a better academic achievement. This can be fulfilled through the design of positive and cooperative T-S and S-S classroom relationships. In this regard, both parties would feel the sense of belonging to a community that cares for them. Jere (1995) equally appealed for enhancing socialization among students as a solution to lessen their classroom conflicts. This is the role of the teacher who should project *positive expectations* among his/her learners. As for Allwright (1996), socialization has positive pedagogic implications "in the context of compulsory schooling" (p. 212). In such a context, the teacher

> …may be officially expected by 'society' both to socialize learners into the immediate educational environment, and simultaneously to play a major role in socializing learners into the wider society outside of and subsequent to the compulsory school system itself. (Ibid, p. 212)

Allwright (1996) set the distinction between *internal socialization* and *external socialization*. The first type "would refer to the development of patterns of behavior appropriate to the classroom as a social setting" (p. 214) where the learning group (peers' collaboration on classroom learning assignments) intermingles with the social group (the interpersonal T-S and S-S relationships that develop under the roof the classroom). As for the second type of socialization, it invokes "the development of patterns of behavior appropriate to the world outside and beyond the classroom" (Ibid, p. 214). This entails preparing students to get integrated into a distant language community that may encompass either native or non-native English speakers.

The majority of FYPESs seem to have reached the stage of internalizing social behavior and socialization skills in the classroom. Socialization at the IPEIT can be deemed as both a product and an in due-course process. The outcome of this process is classroom

behavior (Allwright, 1996). Thus, it is "plausible to attempt to interpret classroom behavior, both of the teacher and of learners, as in large measure the product of their prior socialization experiences" (Allwright, 1996 p. 224).

Be it 'internal' or 'external', socialization is bound by the learning atmosphere that refers to the learning environment of the classroom. To Kohonen (1992), CL contributes to shaping such an environment where students can meet their needs "… in a way that is beneficial for both academic achievement and the development of the learners' social and learning skills" (pp. 14-15). It is this environment that Cordall (2014) spoke about and depicted as a drive towards more successful teaching and learning experience. As shown in Figure 16, the majority of FYPESs (22 of them) perceive this environment as conducive to learning.
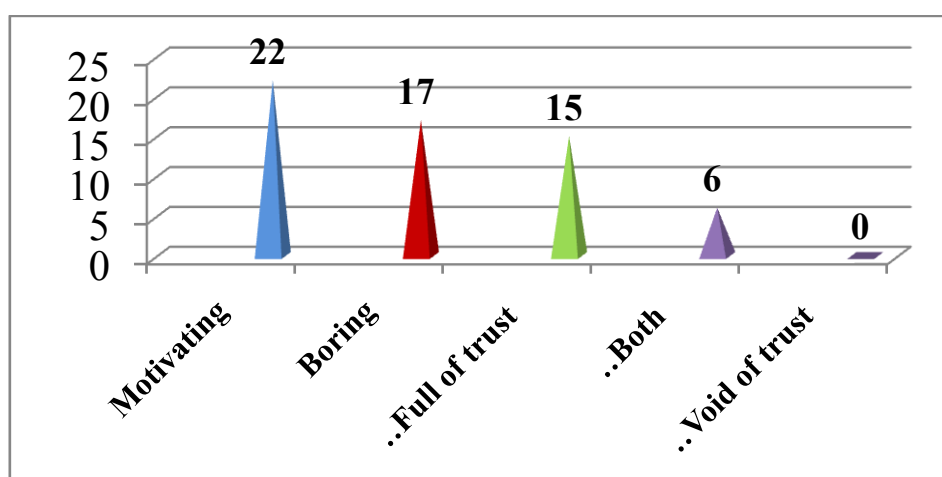
**Figure 16: Learning Atmosphere**

Kohonen (1992) argues that CL engages learners in a positive interaction with the classroom environment, which would increase their self-esteem and self-confidence as well as strengthen their ego by lowering the inhibitions that may hinder their paths for better achievements. It would also improve their views of themselves as learners who "… may become better learners, able to utilize their learning potential more fully" (Ibid, p. 15). The present article showed that their affective potential grows with the growth of their social

potential for learning, collaborating, cooperating, and integrating into a positive in-class learning atmosphere. The latter entails "a team environment where learners celebrate each others' successes and provide assistance to each other is likely to promote more positive peer relationships, social support, and, partly for that reason, higher self-esteem and academic achievement" (Ibid, p. 34).

However, Figure 17 shows that most FYPESs (47) consider the personality of the student more important than the learning environment in enhancing classroom integration. CL upheld by *peer learning* is then rated third in the scale followed by the role of productive assignments, hence task-based learning in tracing the joint between the affective and the social components for classroom integration.
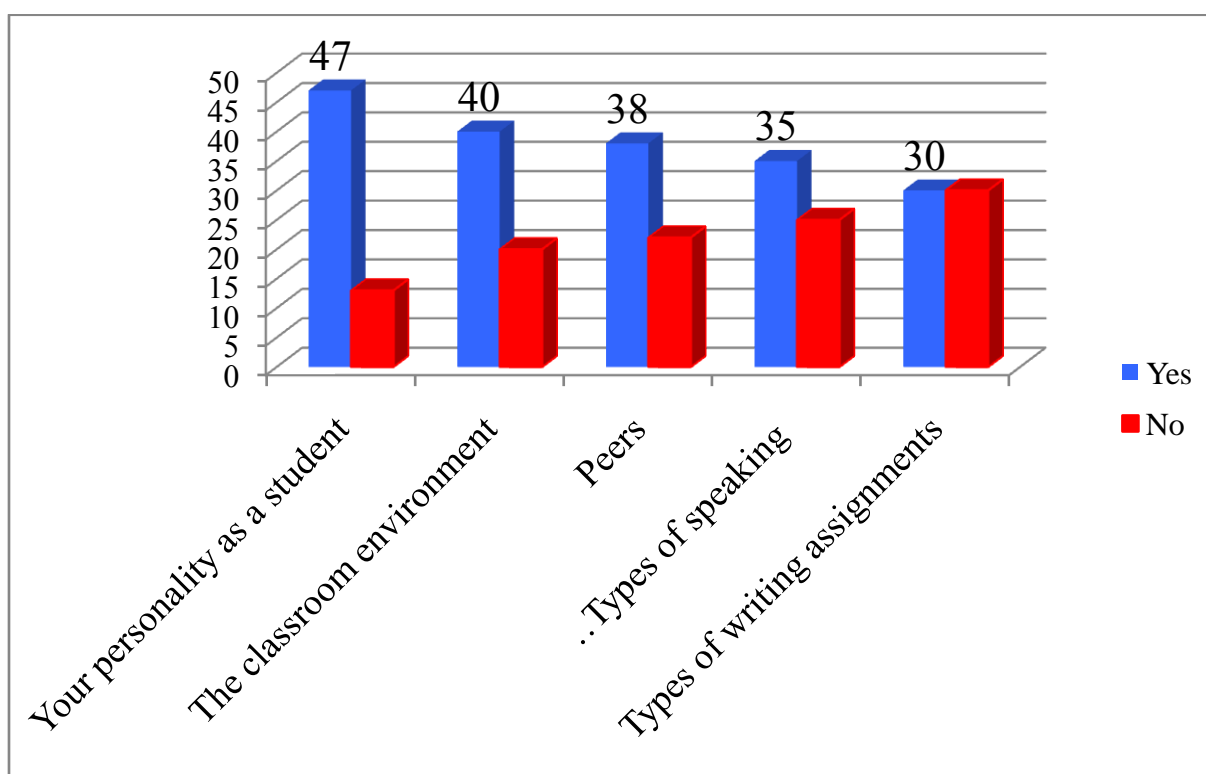


**Figure 17: The factors helping students' integration into the classroom culture**

It is imperative that students be endowed with social skills that involve "… an explicit teaching of appropriate leadership, communication, trust and conflict resolution skills so that the team can function effectively" (Kohonen, 1992, p. 35). When they engage in

spoken or written use of the TL, they interact with each other (SS) and with their teacher (TS) negotiate meaning and construct knowledge together. Their interaction allows them to take the risk in order to transcend the *comprehensible input* to a *comprehensible output* (Ibid). This would be fulfilled through their goal-oriented productive assignments.
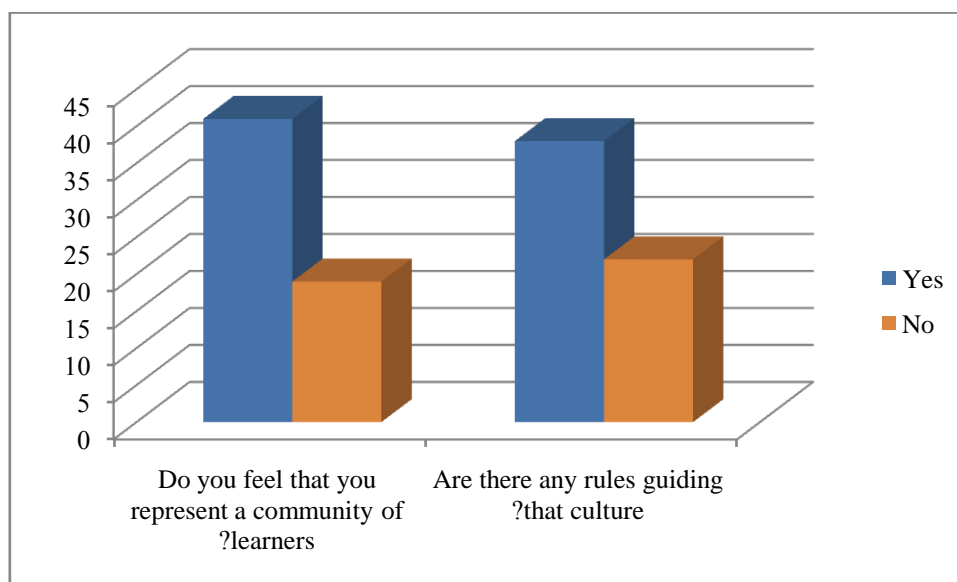


**Figure 18: Students' perceptions of the classroom culture**

From Figure 18, one can notice that the majority of FYPESs are aware of the classroom culture in that most of them (41) recognized their representation of a community of learners who abide by certain rules guiding that culture. 38 of them already admitted the existence of such rules as discipline, collaboration, cooperation, respect, trust and fulfillment. The latter are tenets concretized through FYPESs' psychological and social engagement in spoken and written assignments. These assignments present learning at the IPEIT as task-oriented, culture-related and genre-based. It is an example of socialized and personalized learning that has been developing steadily with regard to such a Tunisian ESP classroom as the first-year IPEIT one.

## Conclusion:

The article at hand reported on a case study applied to the first-year IPEIT classroom. It showed that SFL is congruent with such a Tunisian ESP classroom since it cast light on the English language productive use in such a non-native academic setting. This feasibility was proved through the active *functioning* of language as a *system* for both written and spoken interaction and communication. ESP could be viewed as a tool for Tunisian FYPESs' socialization to the classroom 'culture.' This was achieved via their collaboration on classroom written and spoken assignments that in turn represent "genre awareness activities" (Millar, 2011, p. 6). Through these activities, students are shown the functioning of language in relation to the context of its use. Davis (1999) invites both ESP and EFL teachers to create in-class opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. This is meant to catalyze both ESP and EFL learners. In the first-year IPEIT classroom, FYPESs are presented as valuable resources for socialized and crystallized learning. Learning equally appears as a psychological and social process of collaborative give-and-take between the learner and the teacher as well as among the learners themselves (Nunan, 1992). In sum, "language learners need positive experiences of what they can do with their language communicatively" (Kohonen, 1992, p. 22).

# References

Allwright, D. (1996). Social and pedagogic pressures in the language classroom: The role of socialization. In Coleman, H. (Ed.) *Society and the language classroom* (pp. 209-228). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Assinder, W. (1991). Peer teaching, Peer learning: One model. *ELT Journal*, *45* (3), 218-229.

Broady, E. & Kenning, M. M. (Eds.). (1996). *Promoting learner autonomy in University language teaching*. London: The Association for French Language Studies.

Carpenter, C. (1996). Peer-teaching: A new approach to advanced level language learning. In Broady, E. & Kenning, M. M. (Eds.). *Promoting learner autonomy in university language teaching*, pp. 23-38. London: Association for French Language Studies.

Charters, E. (2003). The use of think-aloud methods in qualitative research: An introduction to think-aloud methods. *Brock Education, 12* (2), *68-82*. Retrieved from: http://brock.scholarsportal.info/journals/brocked/home/article/viewFile/38/38

Cordall, I. (2014). *Positive Learning Environment as a key to Students' Success*. [PowerPoint slides]. Tunisia TESOL Second National Conference on Reflective English language Teaching: Exploring our own Classroom Practice. AMIDEAST.

Da Silva, C. P.(2010). *Teachers and learners: Investigating the language classroom*, 164-176. Retrieved from:http://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/artigo8321.pdf

Davis, B.G. 1999. Cooperative learning: Students working in small groups. *Speaking of Teaching, the Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching, 10* (2), 1-4. Retrieved from:http://web.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/Newsletter/cooperative.pdf

Donough, J. M. & Shaw, C. (1993). *Materials and methods in ELT*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. United States of America: Mahwah, New Jersey.

Duff, P. A. & Anderson, T. (2015). Academic language and literacy socialization for second-language students. In Markee, N. (Ed.). *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction, pp 1-32.* Retrieved from: http://www.academia.edu/9682010/Academic_language_and_literacy_socialization_for_second-language_students_-_2015

Ducharme, D. & Bernard, R. (2001). Communication breakdowns: An exploration of contextualization in native and non-native speakers of French. *Journal of pragmatics*, *33* (6), 825-847.

Fontaine, L. (2012). Language as a social semiotic in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. *Semiotix*. Retrieved from: http://semioticon.com/semiotix/2012/03/language-as-social-semiotic-in-hallidays-systemic-functional-linguistics/

Glasser, W. (1986).*Control theory in the classroom*. New York: Harper & Row.

Gerry, A. &Wingard, P. (1992).*The teaching of English as an international language*. UK: Thomas & Sons Limited.

Gourlay, L. (2005). Directions and indirect action: learner adaptation of a classroom task. *ELT Journal*, *59* (3), 209-215.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978).  Language as a social semiotic: The Social interpretation of language and meaning. London: Edward Arnold.

Haratyan, F. (2011). Halliday's SFL and social meaning. *2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR, 17*,  260- 264.  Retrieved from: http://www.ipedr.com/vol17/49-CHHSS%202011-H10074.pdf

Kohonen, V. (1992). Experiential language learning: Second language learning as cooperative learner education. In Nunan, D. (Ed.), *Collaborative language learning and teaching*. Cambridge: CUP, pp. 100-114.

Layton, L. (2014). Socialization technique helps in academic achievement, trial study finds. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/socialization-technique-helps-in academic-achievement-trial-study-finds/2014/03/05/674d1e0e-a495-11e3-a5fa-55f0c77bf39c_story.html

Lemke, J. (1988). Genres, semantics, and classroom education. *Linguistics and Education, 19,* 81-99. Retrieved from: http://www.sciencedirect.com.sci-hub.org/science/article/pii/S0898589888800111

Liu, M. (2014).The social interpretation of language and meaning. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 4*, (6), 1238-1242. Retrieved from: http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol04/06/20.pdf

Lukin, A., Moore, A.R, Herke, M. Wegener, R., & Wu, C. (2011). Halliday's model of register revisited and explored. 187-213. Retrieved from: http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1634&context=artspapers

Liu, M. (2014).The Social interpretation of language and meaning. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, *4* (6), 1238-1242. Retrieved from: http://ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/tpls040612431250/9414

Mathews, C. (1994). *Speaking solutions*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Miles, R. (2009). Oral presentations for English proficiency purposes. *Reflections on English Language Teaching, 8* (2), 103–110.

Millar, D. (2011).Promoting genre awareness in the EFL classroom.*English Teaching Forum*, *49 (2)*, 2-15. Retrieved from: http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/49_2_2_millar_0.pdf

Murray, D. (1992). Collaborative writing as a literacy event: Implications for ESL instruction. In Nunan, D. (Ed.), *Collaborative language learning and teaching* (pp. 100-114). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (Ed.). (1992). *Collaborative language learning and teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Donnell, M. (2011). Introduction to systemic functional linguistics for discourse analysis. Retrieved from: http://web.uam.es/depatamentos/ilyletras/filoinglesa/Courses/LFC11/LFC

Olsen, T. (2011). Using Peer Learning in the Classroom. Retrieved from: http://tenntlc-utk-edu.wpengine.netdna-\cdn.com/files/2010/12/HowToPeerLearning_Final.pdf

Petrić, B. & B. Czárl. (2003). Validating a writing strategy questionnaire. *System, 31*, 187-215.

Suryani, I., Kamaruddin, H., Hashima, N., Aizan, Y., Salleh, A. R. & Hazry, D. (2014). Rhetorical structures in academic research writing by non-native writers. *International Journal of Higher Education, 3* (1), 29-38. Retrieved from: http://www.sciedu.ca/journal/index.php/ijhe/article/view/3593/2167

Swales, J. M. (1990).*Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: CUP.

Van Someren, M. W. Barnard, Y. F., & Sandberg, J. A. C. (1994).*The think aloud method: A practical guide to modelling cognitive processes.* London: Academic Press. Retrieved from: http://echo.iat.sfu.ca/library/vanSomeren_94_think_aloud_method.pdf

Zemach, D. E.& Rumisek Lisa A.(2005). College writing: From paragraph to essay teacher's guide. Oxford: Macmillan.

## Authors' Biographies

**Hedia Ben Elouidhnine** is an English practitioner at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia.  She taught English for twelve years at the Preparatory Institute for Engineering Studies, Tunis (IPEIT). She is pursuing her PhD in both pragmatics and ESP in an endeavor to bridge between both core fields of applied linguistics. She is equally interested in classroom ecology and EFL teaching pedagogy.

**Kaouther Ferjani** is an English instructor at the Preparatory Institute for Engineering Studies, Tunis (IPEIT). She is a member of  TESOL Arabia and TESOL Tunisia. She has an MA in Applied Linguistics from Manouba University. She is currently pursuing her PhD studies in linguistics. Her main interests include corpus linguistics, academic writing, English for specific purposes and student centered learning in the EFL classroom.

**Appendix 1**

# A Questionnaire for Students

Dear students,

Please complete this questionnaire. It is for research purposes. Your answers will remain confidential.

*Gender: M/F     Age:*

*Please, tick (√) where appropriate:*

**1.  Do you collaborate in English learning?**          __Yes          ___No

**2.  Doyou collaborate with whom?**
a/ Teacher          b/ Peers          c/ Both

**3.  Which skills do you collaborate mostly on?**
a/ Speaking          b/ Writing          c/Both

**4.  Which <u>speaking</u> assignments do you collaborate mostly upon?**
a/ Oral Presentations          b/  Dialogues          c/Role-plays

**5.  Which <u>writing</u> assignments do you collaborate mostly upon?**
a/ Writing short paragraphs          b/Writing essays

**6.  Is the written and spoken task divided among you?** __Yes          ___No

**7.  Do you find the topics that you treat with your classmates in class**
a/ Enjoyable          b/Boring          c/Inciting conversation          d/ not engaging

**8.  What do you think you learn from peer learning?**
a/  Socialization          b/Motivation          c/Both

**9.  Do you find your learning atmosphere:**
a/ motivating     b/ boring     c/ full of trust and respect     d/ void of trust and respect

**10. Please answer with Yes or No:**

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** What does help you integrate into the classroom culture? <br> a/ Your personality as a student <br> b/ The classroom environment <br> c/ Peers <br> d/ Types of speaking assignments <br> e/ Types of writing assignments | <br>……. <br>……. <br>……. <br>……. <br>…….. | <br>…….. <br>…….. <br>…….. <br>…….. <br>…….. |
| **2.** Do you feel that you represent a community of learners in that culture? | …….. | …….. |
| **3.** Are there rules guiding that culture? If Yes, specify: <br> ------------------------------------------------------------------- | …….. | …….. |

*Thank you for your cooperation* ☺